Praise Odes

by Jeff Schiff

Praise County Line
Fruit & Veggie
and other screech to stop
honor box
named and nameless
roadside opportunists
hawking red thumb
and peewee fingerlings
patty pan saucers
zukes past their edible sellby
pints and pecks
dug from hobby
and income plots
campwood if you need it
five bucks a brimming armful
carving pumpkins ready
later in the month

Praise buzzards
rot sentinels
cartoon condor wannabes
drowsy in their crimson courtship caps
a wake of wobbly turkey vultures
wattled and snoooded
flapless in hemlock
or sugar maple
as you peddle
swing low sweet carrion
your doubletake dread
hard hard
dammed hard away
down soy hemmed roads
Praise caw caw
and all human mimicry
tweet and chirp
feeble onomatopoeia
the yap of turkey vultures
courting in oak boughs
geese barking their flotilla into line
the shrill of Jays
the trill the drum the clack
the parrot the mock

Praise basking
turtles
leatherbacks paints and sliders
no believers them
in social distance
in measured queuing
draped and dangly
over surfaced logs
over lily roots
jumbled they are
on rock tops
baled carapace to carapace
flipper to flipper
hard work that thermal management

Praise borers
and tree drummers
that urge to tap heart matter
to signal
to drill down to xylem
to traffic in honeyed sap
some tunneling their nuisance
up from frass galleries
tactically beyond view
emerald ash and powderpost beetles
some eager for the notice
echoing their presence across copse and grove
nuthatches and flickers
redheaded
downy
pileated
woodpeckers
Praise bald
eagles
this morning
a mating pair
just down
from their flap and glide
flap and glide
and hollowboned soar
looking me off
at seventy paces
birdy stinkeye
birdy beakdeep in rodent viscera
talon rip talon tear

Praise congregational
life
bunched on sagging limbs
arrayed on utility lines
swallows pigeons starlings
unidirectional meetups
flocks of do as I do
bands preparing for flight
perch and roost predators
about to zero in
prey in the distance
pray down below

Praise catch
and release
two hunch and hand blow locals
you name them
Grumman dinghy
puddled morning
doomy skies
moored atop spatterdock
that predawn pulling from warm sheets
that giving over
to cold chop and whitecaps
to walleye to perch
and channel cat
who don’t measure up
but somehow do
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